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Winter Wonderland: Preserved images capture Lab's early days and first staff

This article includes several historical photos of Los Alamos and the surrounding areas during the wintertime, as well as context for the photos.

## Winter Wonderland: Preserved images capture Lab's early days and first staff

By Madeline Whitacre, archivist-historian, [National Security Research Center](#)

The winter season is here, bringing with it beautiful snowy scenes and cold-weather activities.

The National Security Research Center (NSRC), which is the Lab's classified library and also houses unclassified artifacts from Los Alamos history, has preserved photos of wintertime scenes from over the years in an effort to safeguard our history. We're sharing a few of our favorites in a nod to the season.

### Year-round shorts is timeless

Before the Lab was established in Los Alamos in 1943, the mesa was home to a boys' [boarding school](#). Students at the school also enjoyed winter activities, such as playing hockey on Ashley Pond. The school uniforms included shorts that were worn year round, including on snowy days.



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caption: Students from the Los Alamos Ranch School play hockey on Ashley Pond around 1940 before the Lab was established. The pond is now part of the modern-day downtown.

### Lab employees have skied for nearly 80 years



During World War II the Manhattan Project, the secret wartime effort to create the world's first atomic bombs, established its weapons design laboratory in Los Alamos. During their freetime, early Lab staff took advantage of the winter weather in northern New Mexico, taking part in cross country and downhill skiing near the town. Many of these winter wartime scenes are preserved in the [Bradner home films](#), which the NSRC recently rescanned to ensure long-term preservation. (**Hugh and Marjorie Bradner**, a physicist and secretary at the wartime lab, respectively, took home videos of their adventures in New Mexico.)



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<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1655bOKMYfol-y07V6M3WiiGuqRQh9jM4/view?usp=sharing>

caption: Staff at wartime Los Alamos unload their ski equipment in deep snow to get ready for the day's activities.



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caption: This photo created from the [Bradner home films](#) shows early Lab staff getting ready for cross country skiing at the Valles Caldera in the mid-1940s.



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<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C4mZMp5NP-LSR2Jb5xyMPipL2ozjiD0W/view?usp=sharing>

caption: Cross-country skiing in the Valles Caldera.

**Northern New Mexico was beautiful back then, too**



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caption: Winter views from the main hill captured in the wartime Bradner films.





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caption: The Omega Bridge, which was part of the post-World War II infrastructure projects at the Lab, was completed in 1951.



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<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17mETxUUQNfN7KHfIfn3FNzn-OfJgyD6/view?usp=sharing>

caption: Fuller Lodge in the wintertime. Originally a Los Alamos Ranch School building, Fuller Lodge was used as staff housing and a dining hall during the Manhattan Project era, which was the U.S. government's top-secret effort to build atomic bombs to help end World War II.

The photos in this article are part of the collections of the National Security Research Center. The NSRC photo collection contains between half a million to a million photographs and photo negatives dating from 1943 to 2003.

## Looking for more winter scenes?

Watch [Part I](#) and [Part II](#) of the rescanned Bradner films for historical wintertime footage. This footage has been digitally available for many years, but the scan was low quality. The original color film was recently rescanned by **Laura Le**, an archivist at the NSRC. Le is a part of the Digital Collections Team, which digitizes important classified weapons media data that cannot be replicated today. From time to time, the team comes across unclassified media, such as these home movies, which are preserved as a part of the Lab's history.

Want to see more stories, photos and films from the Lab's early days? Visit [nsrc.lanl.gov](https://nsrc.lanl.gov). Need research materials in electronic form? We can also help with your digitization projects. Contact us at [nsrc@lanl.gov](mailto:nsrc@lanl.gov).